

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE ETIQUETTE GUIDE

State Historic Preservation Office
Arizona State Parks (602-542-4009)

Welcome to the past! Arizona contains some of the nations -- and indeed the worlds -- greatest archaeological sites. Please take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with this site etiquette guide that will facilitate an enjoyable visit for you, AND for others who follow you!

Archaeological sites in Arizona are the remains of a long occupation of prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic cultures. They are a fragile and non-renewable resource. You are responsible for the stewardship of these ruins, both for public enjoyment and education, and for preserving their scientific values. The following guidelines will help you minimize impacts to archaeological sites:

1. Walls are fragile and continually deteriorating. That is why they are called “ruins.” **Climbing, sitting or standing on walls can damage them. Also, picking up or moving rocks alters the walls forever.**
2. Artifacts, where they lay, tell a story. Once they are moved, a piece of the past is destroyed forever. **Digging, removing artifacts, or piling them up changes what can be learned from these pieces of the past.**
3. Cultural deposits, including the soil on an archaeological site, are important for scientific tests and are used in reconstructing past environments. For instance, from such information we can learn what kinds of plants were be used by the past inhabitants. **Please carry out any trash (especially organic remains) you may have while visiting a site.**
4. Fragile desert plants and soils that are part of archaeological sites are destroyed when you stray from the trail. Also, snakes and other small desert animals make their homes in the bushes and under rocks and in burrows . . . you may disturb them. **Please stay on trails . . . they are there for your protection and the protection of fragile cultural remains.**
5. Fire destroys prehistoric organic materials, ruins the dating potential of artifacts, and damages or even destroys rock art. **Absolutely no fires, candles, or smoking should occur at archaeological sites.**
6. Oils from even the cleanest hands can cause deterioration of prehistoric drawings and ruin the dating potential for future scientists trying to unravel the meaning of symbols painted and pecked on stone. **Please refrain from touching rock art.**
7. Graffiti (drawing/painting, scratching, and carving) is destructive and can destroy rock

art, as well as deface wooden/stone buildings.

Graffiti destroys rock art as well as other values.

8. Pets damage sites by digging, urinating and defecating in them. They can destroy fragile cultural deposits and frighten other visitors and native animals.

Please do not bring pets onto archaeological sites.

Finally, be aware of your surroundings when you are outdoors. Avoid driving or riding your bicycle through sites; pitching your camp in a site; dismantling historic buildings for firewood or any other use; and, camping, or making campfires, in historic buildings.

All archaeological sites on public (federal and state) land in Arizona are protected by the Archaeological Resources Protection Act and state laws that prohibit digging, removing artifacts, damaging and/or defacing archaeological resources; these laws provide for both felony and misdemeanor charges with jail time, confiscation of property, and large fines. Arizona state law also protects graves (human remains) and grave goods located on state and private land.

If you see people vandalizing sites, please report it as soon as possible to the public land manager (e.g., the Forest Service, the Arizona State Land Department, etc.) or their law enforcement entity.

Archaeological site locations are also protected under federal and state laws. Please do not disclose information about where sites are located, as it could potentially lead to those sites being vandalized or looted.

By following these simple guidelines, **YOU** can help preserve these unique and fragile remains of **OUR** American heritage. Remember, **THE FUTURE OF THE PAST DEPENDS ON YOU!** Thanks for your cooperation, and we hope that you enjoy visiting archaeological sites in Arizona!
